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gourd or his straw hat, keeping a ready supply in his left hand. In his right he carries the light hoe used for planting. With it he scratches the top or flank of the mound, while with his left, almost simultaneously, he throws the seeds into the newly made hole. The hole is then flattened out with the back of the hoe. Thus the farmer proceeds from mound to mound and row to row, working with amazing speed and ease: one man is able to sow about one acre in from five to six hours, with hardly any rest. This is the method used for sowing on mounds; sowing on ridges is even easier and quicker. No hoe is used, and the farmer can make use of both hands for the sowing, the seeds being pressed into the soft soil with the heel. The distance kept between two plants is a little over 2 feet. The sowing of one field with millet or sorghum is invariably done in a day or two, and is nearly always carried out single-handed. Where normally a larger group would be working together—brothers or a father and sons—the rest of the team would be occupied on another field, carrying out ridging, i.e. work for which co-operation is more urgently required. But when for one reason or another a farmer falls behindhand with his planting, ridging and sowing may have to be done at the same time. Once I saw a man and his two sons of 10 or 11 years carrying out this combined and hurried work: the boys were hoeing, preparing the ridges; the father followed in their tracks, sowing. After every ridge they had completed the boys waited for the man to catch up with the sowing. The ridges were crooked, irregular.

In these first days of the planting season the Nupe keep short days: they start comparatively late, about 8 a.m., and rarely return later than 2 or 3 o'clock. As the season wears on their working day extends. They start at daybreak and often do not return till 5 or 6 in the afternoon. They have their midday meal out on the farm, some bringing their own food, others having it brought out to them by their wives or daughters. At that time of the year, when fresh leaves and herbs are plentiful on the farms, the men rarely return home without a fair supply of various kinds: broad leaves which the Nupe women like for wrapping food in, or a special kind of aromatic leaf which the women use for their bath, or occasionally medicinal herbs used for various purposes. The men tie the leaves round their straw hats, and thus pleasantly and ornately attired wander home. A bath, a change of clothes, and afterwards the evening meal concludes their day.

To return to sowing. A day or two after bulrush-millet has been sown, maize is planted in very much the same fashion, again mostly in one day. Then one has to wait for another heavy rainfall before the next crops on the list, late millet and sorghum, can be sown. As a rule all four crops are sown within a week or ten days. These voluntary or involuntary waiting periods have their use: for often it becomes necessary to get one's tools repaired, perhaps a new blade fixed to the hoe, or to find new tools for the young boys who will, this year, join their fathers for the first time in the farm-work. By the time sorghum is planted the rains fall fairly regularly, and there is no need for further waiting.

The farmer turns directly to the planting of ground-nuts, which is reckoned to take from five to ten days. Ground-nuts must be planted on

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244 a new plot, and new ridges must therefore be prepared. The planting itself is also a slow process, the seeds are placed into the soil with the fingers and the earth then stamped down with the heel.

The planting of yams demands no less skill and patience. Yam is likewise planted on a fresh plot and involves the preparation of new mounds —the work of several days. The planting itself is also spread over a number of days, one man needing two or three days to plant one acre. Half a tuber is used as seed (called *ebu*). The planter carries the seed yams in a cloth tied round his waist; he inserts the tuber about 1 foot deep into the loose earth of the mound, and then pats the top of the mound back into shape either with his hands or with the light planting hoe. Having covered a section of the field, he goes over it again and places a grass cap over the top of each mound, weighting it down with earth; the grass cap protects the young plant from the sun and at the same time provides a convenient sign by which the planter can distinguish planted from unplanted mounds. About two months after planting stakes 4 feet high are put up on the side of the mounds, which will serve as support for the vine; sometimes a conveniently placed tree may be used for the same purpose.

241 Now, assuming that planting has started early in April, our time-table has taken us to the end of the month or the beginning of May. It is by then high time for the first weeding, which is to clear the ridges for the growing plant and to remove roots, leaves, and undergrowth which the burning of the farms has but imperfectly destroyed. Not until after this weeding, which takes the best part of three weeks, will the farmer be able to enjoy a short period of rest, between five days and a week. It reaches as a rule into June, and into the short break in the rains which is known as the 'little dry season'. The period of rest inaugurates a more leisurely period of work. In June many farmers work on their large farms only two days in succession, and rest on the third day, or devote it to the lighter work on the garden-plots round their houses. The 'second weeding', which takes from five to ten days, and is to clear the young millet plants of the high grass, is also a task allowing of comparative leisure, except when it coincides with the planting of cotton, a delicate and lengthy operation, which falls in the same time. Farmers who possess marsh-land plots are sowing rice in June; on inland farms cassava is planted—but cassava can be planted at any time, and needs little skill or attention: cuttings of the stem are simply put into the ground; one person can plant a half-acre field easily in a day. The beginning of July heralds a period of increased activity. It starts with the reaping of bulrush-millet, to be followed immediately by the sowing of beans and another, third, weeding. Let me illustrate the change from comparative leisure to renewed pressure of work by quoting a few entries from my diary for 1936.

Doko, 15 May.—Bulrush-millet 2–3 feet high. Yam vines fairly long. Yam stakes are being put up. Cassava and sweet potatoes are being planted.

Doko, 1 June.—The people have begun to sow cotton, and some farmers also rice. Grass on millet-sorghum farms very high. Weeding ('second weeding') in progress in many places.